The Secret of a Girl's Indiscretion——By William Le Queux

WHILE engaged upon a strenuous government propaganda during the war I was one night addressing a large audience in a public hall in Edinburgh concerning the insidious efforts of the Germans to secure our undoing, of the marvelous system of Prussian espionage in our midst, and even the preparation of German uniforms to be used as a surprise to us on the day when the enemy set his iron heel upon our shores.

The day upon which I addressed that packed audience, which was presided over by a well known Scottish peer, and at which the elite of Edinburgh were present, had been a black one, indeed. It was Tuesday, June 6, 1915, and at midday the nation had received a profound shock at the news that Lord Kitchener had been drowned off the Orkneys. At Hooge the Germans were advancing and occupying the British trenches, the Austrians were advancing in the Trentino, while the admiralty had told us that we had lost the battle of Jutland. The spirits of the nation were falling on that, one of the blackest days of the war.

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I COULD feel that my audience, that sea of pale faces which showed dimly across the footlights, was depressed. Therefore I had taken a cheerful note of optimism and urged them to look and work for brighter days when Germany should be crushed.

I had spoken for an hour and a quarter, and had resumed my chair. To the applause I bowed my acknowledgments, and then, after the usual vote of thanks, I passed into the anteroom and was putting on my coat when the hallkeeper came to me and said:

"There's a young lady who wishes to speak to you, sir. She says she can wait if you are engaged."

"Ah, an autograph hunter, I suppose!" I said, with a smile. "Very well. Tell her to bring up her book." As a lecturer, like every other, I had many applicants for specimens of my uneven scribble.

"I don't think the young lady wants an autograph, sir," was the man's reply. "She wants to see you—to speak to you."

"Very well. In ten minutes," I said.

"May the lady come in, sir?" asked the hallkeeper, putting his head inside the door.

"Certainly," I replied, and the next moment a tall, dark-haired, extremely good-looking girl was ushered in. She was quietly dressed, and her bearing was that of a lady.

"I do hope, Mr. Le Queux, that you will forgive me for troubling you. I have come here tonight expressly to see you and to ask your advice upon—well, upon a private affair of my own, one which is of gravest concern to me."

"I haven't the pleasure of your name," I said.

"Ida Duffield," she replied. "I'm sorry I haven't a card. But I'm staying with my mother at the Caledonian Hotel. We live in London—in Deanery street."

"Well, Miss Duffield," I said, with some curiosity, "what is the circumstance which is distressing you?"

She hesitated. Then she said:

"It would take some time to tell you here, and no doubt you are tired after speaking so long and want to get back to your hotel. Would you see me if I called upon you tomorrow morning?"

"Certainly. I'm at the North British, at the other end of Prince's street. But I have to leave for York at 11:30. I'm lecturing there tomorrow night. I could see you at 9:30. Is that too early?"

"Not at all. If I stay late tonight my mother might think it strange. I shall be so glad if you will see me in the morning," she added.

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PUNCTUALLY at 9:30 next morning, while I stood in the entrance hall of the hotel, she came in, and, putting out her hand, greeted me. Then I took her into the circular lounge beyond, a rather gloomy room, which is usually deserted, and there we sat together.

"Well," she said, "what I'm about to tell you will at once strike you as curious. And you will, no doubt, suspect that it is all my fault. But I tell you now it is not. I know I have been indiscreet, but—well, it was because I was terrified!"

"Of what?"

"Let me tell you the whole circumstances," she said. "I know that you have had a very wide experience in contra-espionage work, and that is why I presume to trouble you with my private affairs and seek your advice."

"I am ready to listen," I said.

"Well, in the first place, my mother is head of a war hospital at Deauville, on the French coast, and I am a voluntary nurse there. My father established it and defrays its whole cost. Our patients are mostly French poilus, my mother and myself and the whole staff speaking French fairly well. Indeed, my mother is French. We established it in December, 1914, and it has been going on ever since, with 350 beds."

"Very generous of your father," I said, inwardly reflecting that the cost of such a hospital must be very considerable.

"I dare say you know Deauville. It is very fashionable in summer, quite close to Trouville."

"I was once there during the race week," I said.

"Well," the hospital is on the Plage. Eight of those summer villas have been connected up by covered ways," she went on. "I have been there ever since it was opened, and—and——"

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SHE hesitated, as though half inclined not to tell me. "Yes? Go on."

"Well," she resumed in a changed voice, "one night there arrived among others a poilu named Louis Levigne, who had been very severely wounded, and the hospital orderly on the train told me that he had been given up as a hopeless case. He was put to bed in my ward, and his face was so thin and pinched, with such a hopeless expression, that I took compassion on him and did all I could for him that night. Next morning he seemed better. In a weak voice he thanked me, and from that moment he improved. His recovery was so rapid as to amaze the surgeons. He knew English fairly well, and I used often to read to him. In fun he nicknamed me the 'Queen of Deauville'—why, I do not know. Once I asked him, and he annoyed me by replying, 'You are my queen.' I told him not to be silly, but I saw that I had attracted him—that he had become infatuated."

"Ah!" I remarked. "Many a patient has been infatuated with his nurse."

"Yes. It is unfortunately so in my case," was her reply. "When he grew better he used to help me in the ward, and became my most devoted servant. I feared always that my mother would notice his attachment to me. One day three of his friends came from Paris to see him—a woman and two men of the Apache type. Horrible people! I found myself in a quandary, and was longing for the time when he would be discharged and sent home."

"You had no affection for him, I take it?"

"Not in the least. The fact is I am already engaged to an officer who is now at the front. I told him so, but he would not believe it," she said. "One day I was off duty and I met him on the Plage. He compelled me to sit upon a seat and listen to him. He told me a weird and terrible story—how he was one of those motor bandits who had committed so many daring robberies during the two years previous to the war. He admitted that he was an apache—a Paris hooligan. The police had arrested five of the gang, but he had escaped and worked his passage to South America. There he had fallen in with another criminal gang, which had included murder. He showed me his knife, and then, looking me straight in the face, suddenly said: 'If you forsake me I shall use this as I have used it before. You are my queen, and nobody else shall have you as wife!' I rose at once, and, telling him not to be so foolish, left him."

"And then?"

"When later we met at the hospital he tried to renew the conversation, but I refused to listen. So he turned upon me and upbraided me for allowing him to think that I loved him."

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"WHAT did you do then?" I asked.

"I told the medical officer privately that he had a knife in his possession and I thought his injuries had unhinged his mind. Next day the officer spoke to him, but he had hidden the knife—a long double-bladed one of Swedish make—and it could not be found. That same night, however, another patient gave me a packet, saying: 'This is for you, nurse, from Levigne.' I opened it and found the knife."

"At any rate you had the weapon," I said.

"Yes. But he seemed to worship it. It was his mascot, he had told me. While he held it he was immune from arrest. The police could never find him. Oh, if I had but time to tell you all the strange, sensational stories of crime which he had told me from time to time. Surely his career, from his boyhood, had been a romance stranger than one even imagined by a novelist."

"Certainly your position was a most curious and unenviable one," I remarked.

"It was! And the more so when, a few days later, some more visitors from Paris to a middle-aged man who occupied the next bed identified him. I saw one of the visitors start, and then cry: 'Why, Rossignol! I thought you were dead!' Levigne cried. 'No! Not here! Somebody may overhear! Be careful!'"

"Very extraordinary," I said.

"Yes. This caused me to fear him even more. I had heard of the desperate motor bandit known as 'The Nightingale'—the man who had been tracked by the police to a house outside Provins, and there he had held a large force at bay and shot dead two gendarmes. The papers were full of it just before the war; how he held the place and got away scot-free. Le Rossignol had terrorized the suburbs of Paris, as you probably know, until people hardly dared to sleep at night."

"Rossignol," I repeated. "In the Paris argot, though the word means nightingale, in French it is also the sobriquet of a picklock or a skeleton key."

"Is it?" she asked. "I do not know Parisian slang well enough to know that, though I speak French. At any rate, the fact that I had discovered horrified me. I was being persecuted by a man for whom the police were still searching. Was it surprising that he exhibited his knife so exultingly?"

"And what else?" I asked, glancing at my watch.

"Ah, I see you are in a hurry. I must not keep you, Mr. Le Queux. Will you help me?"

"I should like to hear the whole of the circumstances before I make a promise," I said. "Surely, with the knowledge you now possess it would be easy to hand him over to the Paris police for murder. I recollect the case well. It was said that he wore an armored jacket, and that the revolver bullets fired at him by the police did not harm him."

"That is so. But you must catch your train," she urged eagerly. "You have another engagement. Where can I see you again?"

I reflected for a moment.

"Would you care to call at my rooms?" I asked.

"I should be only too pleased," was her reply. "Of course I have to be careful, because I don't want mother to know anything."

So I gave her my address, and she made an appointment to call on me on the following Thursday afternoon.

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In the train as I went south I reflected upon the curious story the handsome young girl had told me, and became convinced that she had confessed only half the truth. She must have allowed the fellow to make love to her. I saw plainly that she was of a romantic turn of mind, and that in all probability she had indulged in a violent flirtation with the disabled poilu who had become an orderly and was ever at her beck and call. In every war hospital there have been similar instances. Nurses, and especially the voluntary ones, who had in so many cases been drawn from the leisured classes, thirsting for sensation, had been prone to flirt with the poor fellows hovering between life and death. And many a pathetic romance of the affection of a soldier for his kindly nurse remains unwritten and unknown.

Any girl who has served in a war hospital will testify to the many little romances, and the many tragedies, which occurred in the wards, both in England and France, during the five years of the great struggle.

I fulfilled my engagement at York, and next day in Lincoln, the next at Bridlington, and then I went direct to London for three days' rest. Traveling and lecturing makes one very fatigued, and while on my tour, which lasted over two years, I was always glad to be back in the ease of my own home, if only for a couple of days.

On the afternoon appointed Ida Duffield called upon me, and I took up the thread of her curious narrative.

"Well, Miss Duffield," I exclaimed, "I have been thinking over all you have told me, but I cannot see what hold this fellow has upon you. If you know him to be the notorious Rossignol, why not tell the police?"

She hesitated, and I saw that she was nonplussed.

"Ah, if I did that I should act against my own interests. Arthur would then know of my indiscretions."

"But I thought you had already told the man to whom you are engaged," I said.

"So I have."

"But not all, eh?"

"No," she admitted. "Not all! Ah, Mr. Le Queux, you cannot know the horrible position in which I now find myself."

"How?"

"This man, Levigne, who so insidiously made love to me, now threatens me with exposure of my letters to him to Arthur! There was a scene between us once—three months ago—which—which has terrified me."

"Please describe it," I said. "If I am to become your adviser in this matter you must tell me the whole truth, Miss Duffield," I said.

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FOR some moments she hesitated to confess to me. As I had surmised, there was more behind it all than she had told me. "You mentioned letters," I added. "What letters have you written him?"

"Little notes written in the hospital," was her low reply. "I know I was extremely foolish, but I did it out of kindness to him. I thought when he was cured and discharged that he would think no more of me. It began when the doctors declared that his injuries must prove fatal."

"Then he has those letters of yours—amorous ones, of course—and he threatens to send them to the man to whom you are engaged to be married, eh? The fellow is a blackmailer as well as an assassin!"

"Yes. And not only that, he threatens to send them to my father."

"Has he put that in writing?" I inquired.

"No. He is too clever."

"You spoke of a scene three months ago. What was it?"

"I was in Paris at the Hotel Lotti with my mother. He had been discharged two months before, and somehow he knew I was in Paris. He watched me cross the Place Vendome alone, and then came up to me. 'Ida, you must meet me in the Bois tonight at 7 o'clock,' he said, and indicated a spot not far from the Armenonville. I told him it was impossible, but he said that he must see me for he had something secret to tell me—some secret information he had gathered concerning a German agent in Paris. At first I refused, but at last, terrified by his attitude, I consented."

"And you went?"

"Yes, I met him there. He was quite nice to me, recalling all our pleasant hours together, and was, of course, full of passionate phrases, telling me that he had never loved anybody but myself. I protested, repeating my engagement to Arthur. This maddened him, for suddenly he sprang up and drew a knife, telling me that I had uttered my last words and that he would serve me as he had served other women who had discarded his love. I screamed. He took hold of me, and we struggled. He tried to kiss me, and I shouted for help. By good fortune a taxicab came along at that instant. The driver pulled up on hearing my scream, and two gentlemen got out. Levigne escaped in the darkness, but I told the gentlemen what had occurred, and they kindly drove me back to the Place Vendome."

"And you have not seen him since?"

"No. He has written to me telling that he is coming to England to see me."

"Why not see him and give him into custody?" I suggested.

"Because, as I have explained, he would then send my father copies of my letters and the originals to Arthur."

"But you surely cannot afford to be blackmailed by a man of such character!" I cried. "It is monstrous!"

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"I WAS so foolish," she declared with extreme nervousness. "I assure you, Mr. Le Queux, I only allowed him to make love to me because I thought his last moments were near, and I felt that I ought not to repel him."

"You kissed him? Come, confess it!" I said, gravely.

"I do not deny it. But I regret it now."

"And you met him clandestinely?"

"Yes, I did."

"You made pretence of loving him in order to humor him?" I said, yet it seemed amazing that a lady such as she was should fall in love with a low-born Parisian Apache, a man who defied the police, and whose criminal deeds had, before the war, been the talk of Europe.

"Yes," she replied, in a low voice. "That is so. But now I do not know how to act. All this is driving me mad—mad!" she cried, in despair, rising from her chair and placing her hand upon her brow. "I feel that I shall go out of my mind. I get no sleep, no rest. The image of that terrible man haunts me!"

And her eyes glared out at me in the tense strain of her overstrung nerves.

"No, no," I said. "Do not take it that way. We must find a way by which we can combat him."

"He swears that he is coming to London; that if I still refuse him he will kill me!"

"The affair is quite simple. Have him arrested."

"I should have to appear against him. Look at the scandal."

"But you have already told Mr.—er——"

"Arthur Mansfield," she said.

"You've already told Mr. Mansfield that the fellow is persecuting you," I remarked. "Therefore, why shrink from taking a firm and drastic hand?"

"Because of those letters. If they come into his possession they must cause a breach between us," she declared, hopelessly. "Look," she added, "I have brought some of the letters that Levigne has written to me. Read them."

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I TOOK the half-dozen ill-written letters in French, scribbled upon ruled paper in an illiterate hand. The passionate outpourings were just suhh as I should imagine an apache would address to the hatless girl of his heart, the girl of the lower classes in the Montmartre. They were full of fierce affection, of admiration for her beauty, combined with expressions of desperation and of a fierce determination that she should marry no one else.

I noticed that none of them bore any address, except the last. That was dated from a French convalescent hospital in Lwon a month before and contained distinct threats.

"I demand that you meet me in Paris, my dearest Ida," wrote the notorious Rossignol, "at the same place in the Bois at 6 o'clock on the 18th. Recollect the date. Oh, no, I shall not hurt you. Do you think I could do any injury to the one I love better than my own life? You can easily come to Paris on a visit to madame your friend in the Avenue Villiers. I know all about her, and more about you than you think, so do not fail me this time.

"I give you one last chance, my dearest Ida. If you do not reply and keep the appointment I shall know that you no longer love me. Then I shall come to London and see you and your mother again. What will she and your father think when I show them copies of your sweet letters to me, eh? Think, reflect. Do not be cruel to your Louis any longer. No man shall marry you except myself. I repeat that a hundred times. I kiss your dear sweet hands. Write to the Poste Restante at Lyon. Your devoted "LOUIS."

THAT letter was certainly a serious one, and caused me to reflect. If the fellow was really desperate, then it was quite within the bounds of possibility that he might attempt to do her bodily injury. The reputation of Le Rossignol was a very sinister one, for he was certainly one of the most dangerous criminals in all France.

Had he demanded money by menaces I could have quite understood it, for he had done so times without number, and his terrorized victims had paid in order to obtain peace. But he simply desired to marry this young English lady of the highest social standing, whose father was heir-presumptive to an earldom.

After discussing the situation for some time I advised her to make a clean breast of the whole affair to Mr. Mansfield and tell him of her indiscreet letters.

"Tell him the whole story just as you have told me," I urged.

She shook her head, saying:

"Arthur would never believe me. He would declare that while he was at the front with his regiment I was flirting with the patients in the hospital."

"If he really loves you he would believe your version of the affair," I remarked.

"No, Mr. Le Queux," she replied in a hard, strained voice. "I cannot do that—Ireally cannot."

"I suppose you have not replied to this letter?" I said.

"No. What could I say?" she answered. "That is why I am in such fear that at any moment he may appear in London. He has got his discharge from the French army, I know. He has invalided out.

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HER decided reluctance to inform the police struck me as extremely curious. I pointed out to her that if she wrote to the prefect of police in Paris informing him of the whereabouts and identity of the notorious Rossignol she would suffer no further persecution. To this she declared that if she did so he would know that she had betrayed him, and that he would then be relentless in his revenge. He would call her as a witness at his trial and then expose her having written letters of affection to him."

"Think of my family!" she cried in terror. "Think of the scandal and all it means to me—my love for Arthur and all my future. No! No! No!"

"Well," I said with a sigh, "if you are so determined, Miss Duffield, not to tell the police, then I should see him should he come to London and endeavor to temporize with him. We know him to be a fierce and desperate character who will hesitate at nothing, as was proved by his exploits as a motor-bandit and his fight with the police. Therefore it will be best to humor him, and, if possible, entrap him."

"But how can I do it?" she asked, in blank despair.

"I will assist you if you like," I replied. "I must not appear actually upon the scene. You must act as though entirely upon your own initiative."

At this she thanked me very warmly, saying:

"Ah, you do not know how grateful I am to you, though we are comparative strangers. I feel now that I have a friend and protector—some one to advise me."

"My advice is to make a clean breast of the whole affair to Mr. Mansfield," I said. "But as you have decided against such a course, we must adopt another, and I will consider it for a day, and we will meet here the day after tomorrow."

"But if he comes in the meantime?"

"Keep what appointments he may make, but inform me of it over the telephone," and I gave her the number, while she gave me that of her father, and ten minutes later I saw her out.

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NEXT day, just before noon, she rang me up on the telephone asking if she could come and see me. The matter was very urgent, so I at once consented.

When the good-looking girl entered my room I saw by her countenance that something had taken place.

"I have seen him!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "When I went out this morning I met him at the corner of Deanery street and Park lane. He was awaiting me there, and spoke to me."

"Well, what did he have to say?"

"He wants to see me tonight in St. James' Park."

"And you have, of course, agreed."

"Yes. Tonight at 9 at the foot of the steps in the Mall," she said. "But what shall I say to him?"

"Pretend that you regret having treated him with indifference. Humor him. Tell him anything in order to gain time and remove jealousy regarding you. It is that which is dangerous. You will know how to treat him. Make pretense, but at the same time be discreet while you humor him."

"You'll be nearby, won't you?" she begged of me.

I promised, and later she left to join her aunt at a lunch party she was giving at the Ritz. Her mother and father were both away in Scotland. They had gone north on the previous day, she had told me.

Just before 9 o'clock I passed through Spring Gardens into the Mall. It was a rather dark evening, and there was an absence of lights owing to a fear of air raids.

As I approached the steps which led up from the park to the Duke of York's monument I saw the lean figure of a man lurking in the shadow. I could distinguish that he wore a dark overcoat and soft felt hat. It was evidently Louis Levigne, known in the underworld of Paris as "The Nightingale"—the elusive criminal for whom the police of Europe were in active search before the war.

I drew back into the shadow and watched. He stood motionless as a statue until a female figure in black came cautiously down the unlit steps, and suddenly he confronted her. Then I saw it was Ida Duffield.

The pair stood for a moment talking, and then together they strolled slowly in the direction of Buckingham Palace. Presently I crossed the road and followed them at a respectable distance. But I could hear him speaking volubly in French in a high-pitched voice, though I could not distinguish what the fellow said. Only now and then the terrorized girl replied to him.

I could discern in the gloom that he was gesticulating violently. Then suddenly they crossed the road opposite St. James Palace and walked in the direction of the Victoria Memorial, where stood a single well shaded lamp to guide the vehicular traffic coming from Buckingham Palace road.

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AT this point I hurried on and contrived to pass the pair as they were in the zone of faint light, for I wanted to reassure the girl of my presence. As I went by I glanced swiftly and with curiosity into the face of one of the most notorious criminals of modern times. I saw that he was a dark-haired, swarthy fellow, decidedly handsome, though not refined—a countenance like that of a Hungarian gypsy. As for an instant my gaze fell upon him I saw that his big eyes were black and searching, and that his little black moustache was well trained. Truly, he was of that type of low-born lover which we have seen upon the stage for two generations.

Yes, he was a handsome fellow, without a doubt.

As I passed I overheard words—words of passionate affection pronounced with that curious accent which is so essentially of the Montmartre. And she, a lady moving in the best society in London, walked on, listening to him without reply. I knew she had seen me, so I went forward and again effaced myself.

A few minutes later it began to rain heavily, and apparently at her suggestion they turned abruptly to the right, and, passing Buckingham Palace, continued along Constitution Hill toward Hyde Park corner.

At a respectable distance I followed. At last they halted. He was speaking loudly, but whether in appeal or threat I could not decide. Not daring to pass again lest his alert eyes should discern that he was being watched—for I recollected that he was a hunted man—I also halted. They stood in a very dark spot, and as they receded I lost sight of them. Presently, however, from the point of vantage that I had taken up, I saw them emerge from the shadows, and, walking quickly through the now pelting rain, they gained Park lane and went on to Deanery street, where Ida opened the front door very softly with her latchkey.

She admitted him to her father's house in secret! Why?

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I SAW the door close noiselessly after the pair. I had told her to humor him, and apparently she had acceded to his suggestion that, he knowing her father and mother to be away, they should seek shelter from the rain.

This action puzzled me considerably. I stood at the corner of Deanery street for nearly an hour, until at last I saw the front door reopen and the fellow slunk noiselessly out. In an instant he looked up and down and then hurried in my direction, brushing past me in the darkness as he turned the corner.

My first impulse was to ring at the door and inquire for Miss Ida. But I hesitated. I would go on to my room and ring her up on the telephone.

This I did.

"Well, I saw you," I told her ten minutes later. "What has happened?"

"A lot," was her reply. "Is it too late for me to come and see you?"

"Not at all," I answered. "I shall be pleased. I'm very anxious to know."

So she told me she would be with me in a quarter of an hour.

When she came she was buoyant and radiant. I had never seen her in such good spirits.

"Your advice was most excellent," she declared. "It worked well. When we met I expressed regret that I had not reciprocated his great affection, whereupon his manner at once changed. He made all sorts of foolish declarations of love, of course, and repeated that he intended that I should marry him, notwithstanding my social status. Recollecting your advice I raised no great objection. And——" Then she hesitated, apparently somewhat unwilling to tell me the whole truth. "And—well—I have been successful—thanks to your advice I have got back all my letters! Look!"

And she took from the pocket of the thick fur-trimmed coat she was wearing a big packet of letters tied with tape.

"That's excellent!" I cried. "Then you have nothing to fear from Mr. Mansfield! However did you manage it?" I inquired, most agreeably surprised.

"Well—well, he gave them back to me," she replied rather lamely.

"So I see. You took him to Deanery street," I said.

She started and turned pale.

"Then—then you know that—you know?"

"I know that you let him into your house with your key."

"I did not think you followed us there. I looked round once or twice but could not see you," she said. "But you will not say anything—not a word—will you?" she asked eagerly.

"Certainly not. But how did you get your letters back from such a fellow?" I repeated.

She drew a long breath. Then, looking me straight in the face, she replied:

"Mr. Le Queux, wait until tomorrow, or perhaps the day after, and then you will be able to guess."

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SHE would tell me no more, but shook hands with me, and, thanking me for my advice, she went off happily and full of confidence.

The evening papers of the day following revealed to me the truth.

A serious robbery of jewels was reported from the house of the Hon. George Duffield in Deanery street, Park lane, when a fine rope of pearls and a number of other ornaments had been stolen from Mrs. Duffield's bedroom during her absence with her husband in Scotland. The steel jewel case had, the papers reported, been broken open by some expert burglar and its contents extracted. The police had visited the place, but there was absolutely no clue to the thief or how he had managed to enter the premises.

Mrs. Duffield's jewels have never since been seen, and both she and her husband remain in entire ignorance of the compact made between their daughter and the notorious Rossignol. Ida Duffield and Maj. Arthur Mansfield were wedded at the Brompton Oratory two months later, and are now, after the war, one of the happiest couples in the whole kingdom.

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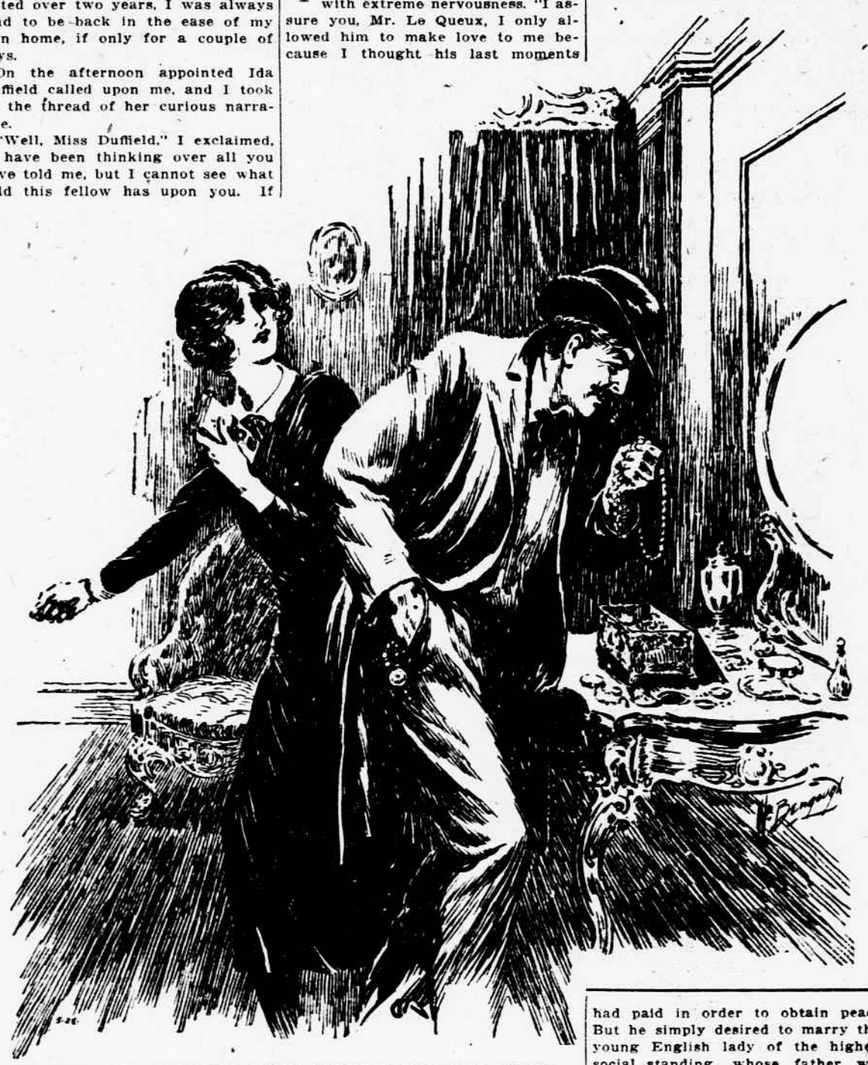

"MRS. DUFFIELD'S JEWELS HAVE NEVER SINCE BEEN SEEN."

This Epidemic of Weeks

By Ring Lardner

TO the editor: They has been a regular epidemic of Weeks around N. Y. lately including Clean Up Week, Good English Week, Music Week, Mail Early Week, Physical Culture Week and etc. and I suppose the contagion is gen. through out the country but in case they's a few places where the ailment ain't spread to, why I may as well exclaim to people that lives in them places what it is like.

We will take forinst. Clean Up Week. The mayor of the town comes out with a announcement in the paper that such and such a week, say the week beginning May 21, will be known as Clean Up Week and dureing that week all citizens is supposed to pick up the rubbish around their house and try and improve the looks of things and wile a great many citizens seems to resent this interference with their personal liberty, why really it ain't such a hardship as it sounds like because with any kind of management why by the end of the following week you can have things looking just as sloppy as they was before and that leaves you 50 weeks out of the yr. to live in dirt and luxury.

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OR take Good English Week. Dureing that week everybody is asked to talk nothing but good grammar. This is a staggering blow to a majority of citizens, but they should ought to remember that in most cities where this is in effect, it is the mayor that suffers the worst as he has to remain practally dumb.

Mail Early Week is in order to help out the post office people and not give them such a rush of work in the evening which is when the big congestion usually comes on acct. of it being most men's habit to not sign their mail till 5 or 6 o'clock when they get back from lunch.

But the Mail Early proposition is easy to beat as all you half to do is sign the letters late in the P. M. as usual and then tell the help to not mail them till the next morning.

Personally I am heartily in favor of the Week system as a gen. proposition though if I was running it I would run it along different lines. For one thing I would suggest a Work Week when everybody would half to do enough work to last a yr. and that would give us all a vacation of 51 weeks when we could go around to different resorts and meet people we always wanted to meet but was never able to meet them because their vacation come at a different time.

Another thing I would have would be Shave Week when every man would be obliged to keep their face smooth and remove their whiskers twice a day for seven days but the other 358 days they would leave them run amuck and the gals couldn't complain because nobody's husband would look any worse than anybody else's.

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IN the same way I would have a Wash the Back of the Neck Week and a Use Your Handkerchief Week and a Bath Week. To say nothin about a Get Your Pants Pressed Week and a Change Your Shirt Week.

I would have a Fancy Foods Week when the Mrs. would be allowed to serve you meals of sweetbreads, chicken patties, fruit salad, alligator pair and get those kind of meals all disposed of in a week and the rest of the yr. she would be compelled to stick to steaks, chops, roast turkey and etc.

I would have a Train Late Week when the trains could go and come any time they felt like, but the rest of the yr. they would half to stick to the time table.

And I would have a Coal Strike Week along about the 1st of June and make it an annual affair lasting 1 wk. only, like the Elks carnival.

I would also have a Peggy Hopkins Week when the papers would be allowed to print any number of cols. in regards to Peggy and what she just said and done, but the rest of the yr. it would be vs. the rules for her name to be mentioned.

I would recommend a Flab Week when you would do all your topping and slicing and missing shots and dureing the other 51 weeks every shot you hit would be perfect.

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ANOTHER week I would arrange for is Murder Week when anybody that felt like murdering somebody would half to do it that week and then if a person failed to get murdered that week, they would know that they was safe for another yr. as it would be vs. the law to murder them in the closed season.

And I would schedule a Natural Week when the gals would all be obliged to appear in their natural colors and you could find out the truth about them.

I would have a Funny Story Week when all the people that wanted to tell you the new one about the 2 Swiss would have to get it out of their system.

I would suggest a Bad Weather Week when they would half to put on all the rain, snow and hail, and a Disease Week when everybody in the family that was going to be sick dureing the fiscal yr. would half to get it over with that week, and a Personal Remarks Week to which your friends would half to confine all their remarks in regards to how thin or fat you are getting and ain't you looseing your hair and etc. and last but not least I would suggest a Peace Week when no mater what your wife said or done, you would just smile at her and tell her yes dearie.

And the rest of the yr. you would be at liberty to raise he—ll.

RING W. LARDNER.

(Great Neck, Long Island, June 2.)

"A PEACE WEEK, WHEN, NO MATTER WHAT YOUR WIFE SAID OR DONE, YOU WOULD JUST SMILE AND TELL HER YES, DEARIE."

"WHEN ALL THE PEOPLE THAT WANTED TO TELL YOU A NEW ONE WOULD HALF TO GET IT OUT OF THEIR HEADS."

International Candle.

SOME years ago a unit of electric illumination called the "international candle" was adopted by the United States, Great Britain and France. The American standard candle was reduced one and six-tenths per cent in order to make it uniform with the English candle and the Bougie Decimale of France. The value of the Hefner, the German unit, is nine-tenths that of the international candle.